

1: Opler E-5 (1931-1937) 1941

(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8  
Chiricahua

## MATURATION

85

When they are just beginning to talk about the ceremony, the girl goes to the woman who is going to take care of her. She brings an eagle feather to this woman. The girl holds the butt end and motions four times with the tip end of the feather toward the woman. The woman takes it the fourth time. Then the woman will take care of the girl. She will rub her and push her out to run.

Right from this time the girl calls that woman "mother," even though she is no relative, and this woman calls the girl "my daughter." And they give each other presents throughout life.

The most conspicuous ritualist of the ceremony is one who will be called "the singer" because it is his primary task to superintend the erection of the sacred shelter in which the songs of the rite are chanted and to sing the songs.

The role of the singer also hovers on the border line between shamanism and priestcraft. He does not depend on a personal supernatural encounter for obtaining his songs, nor does he believe that he can intercede for the benefit of the girl through impromptu appeals to supernatural forces with which he is in special rapport:

I became a singer just through experience. I was interested. Every chance I got I sat inside the teepee and sang the songs. I went to the ceremony every time and learned the songs. I connected myself with this ceremony over forty years ago and learned it from the ground up. I approached one of the men who conducted the ceremony and asked for help. The one who is learning to be a singer gets instruction right at the ceremony. When he has enough experience, he conducts it himself. It is very simple. The prayers don't take long to learn. In the course of two or three ceremonies, even, the songs can be learned. I gave no payment to the one who instructed me.

The fact that no payment passed between this man and the one who taught him the songs is convincing proof that the songs are not a personal shamanistic possession but are conceived of as the sacred property of the people as a whole. A shaman seldom parts with his ceremony unless appropriate payment is made both to him and to the supernatural source involved.

In the selection of the singer the greatest forethought is exercised:

Well, suppose you were an Indian here and you had a granddaughter who was growing up. You would come around and say that you wanted your granddaughter to be White Painted Woman. You know me very well, and you say to me, "There are three or four men who know how to sing for this ceremony. Just

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86

## AN APACHE LIFE-WAY

881

793

533

[608]

[431]

between you and me which one of these men do you think should sing for my granddaughter? Which one should I make my friend?"

And right there you want to be very careful. If you choose one of these men, you are brother to him all your life, even if you are not related to him. You call him friend, but you think just as much of him as you do of your brother. He thinks of your children as his children. After the ceremony is over, you give each other some valuable things—saddles, horses, anything that is worth something. When a man is poor, he gives what he can; it doesn't matter. They do that as long as they live. They might come out equal in giving things to each other.

Then I think about it and say, "You take B. for your granddaughter."

If you choose him, he will be there to see that everything is done right and he will be in there to bless your granddaughter in his way. He blesses all the people when they are putting pollen on the girl. Right in that tepee he asks for good in life for your granddaughter, for all good things, for long life. That's what the ceremony is for. It's up to the man that you choose to have the girl do the things that have always been done in this ceremony. He directs things.

In the minds of individuals the singers are graded according to considerations of friendship and faith. Some singers are thought by their admirers "to know the songs better and to know more about the ceremony." Others watch the fates of the girls for whom particular men have officiated.

I can't say which is the best. The girl my father sang for is still living and is healthy. Many girls die. The ceremony is held so that the girl will grow up and be strong, so you must watch for that. For the girl's puberty rite the Eastern Chiricahua and the Central Chiricahua singers sometimes teach different things. [184] Whatever the singer in charge tells you to do, you must obey. You must follow his directions.

The singer is a free agent as far as obligation to participate in any specific ceremony is concerned:

S.'s mother-in-law was one of the feast-givers. She was talking about the preparations they were making. Just at this time W. [a singer] came up. She spoke to him, asking him to sing for her girl. She called him "brother" and pleaded with him. She said, "I am old and crippled and had to wait to see you. I had no way to get to see you before."

W. just sat there for a long time and said nothing. Then he said, "It looks as if you were waiting for me to come around so it would be easy for you to ask me." He acted as though he wasn't going to do it.

The singer takes his task seriously: "I was singing for C. I took care of her. All my thoughts and efforts were for that girl during the ceremony."